DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 230 280 PS 013 543

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TITLE The Emergence of Visible Language: Interrelationships Between Drawing and Early Writing.
PUB DATE Apr 83
NOTE 41p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Montreal, Canada, April 11-14, 1983).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Child Language; *Freehand Drawing; *Handwriting; Kindergarten; *Kindergarten Children; Language Acquisition; Language Research; Primary Education; *Symbolic Language; Written Language
IDENTIFIERS Participant Observation; *Symbolic Representation

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to examine the interrelationships between drawing, early writing, and the context of talk in which both phenomena occur. Participant observation methodology was used in a self-contained public school kindergarten in order to gather daily data during a 3-month period. Specifically, children freely drew and wrote in an established area, or "center," while the investigator observed and interacted with them to gain insight into their perceptions about these actions. Data collected consisted of audio recordings of the children's talk at the center, their graphic products, observational notes, and interviews with children. Patterns were identified reflecting ways the children combined the drawing and writing processes in the production of one graphic product and in the manner they used drawing and writing terminology referentially across production modes. On the basis of these patterns, inferences were made about written language development. Learning to write was portrayed as a process of gradually differentiating and consolidating the separate meanings of these two forms of graphic symbolism. (Author/MP)

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The Emergence of Visible Language:

Interrelationships between Drawing and Early Writing

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the interrelationships between drawing, early writing, and the context of talk in which they both occur. Participant observation methodology was used to gather data daily during a three-month period in a self-contained, public school kindergarten. The researcher set up a center at which the children freely drew and wrote. She observed and interacted with the children to gain insight into their perceptions of drawing and writing. Data consisted of audio recordings of the children's talk at the center, their graphic products, observational notes, and child interviews. Patterns were identified in how the children combined the drawing and writing processes in the production of one graphic product and in how they used drawing and writing terminology referentially across production modes. On the basis of these patterns, inferences were made about written language development. Learning to write was portrayed as a process of gradually differentiating and consolidating the separate meanings of these two forms of graphic symbolism, drawing and writing.

The Emergence of Visible Language:

Interrelationships between Drawing and Early Writing

Writing has its roots in the young child's growing ability to form representations of the world and to express those representations through various media. Thus, writing, as Vygotsky (1978) stressed, has a role in the history of the child's ability to symbolize. Writing appears to have particularly close ties to drawing, the earlier developed and less abstract form of graphic symbolism. In fact, the letters of the alphabet first appear as art forms in children's drawings (Kellogg, 1970). The purpose of this study was to systematically examine the interrelationships between drawing, early writing, and the context of talk in which they may both occur.

The study was based on data gathered in a participant observation project which focused on young children's verbal and nonverbal behaviors during the processes of drawing and writing. The use of participant observation, or phenomenological, methodology reflects the goals of the study: to describe, not only the observed relationships between drawing and writing, but also the children's expressed differentiation between these two symbol-producing activities. That is, this study was developed from a view of the child as an active investigator of written language. As researcher, I asked, How do young children make sense or conceive of the symbolic process of writing as compared to the process of drawing? More specifically, I focused on these two questions:

1. How did the observed children combine drawing (pictorial symbols) and writing (letters or letterlike symbols) in their work? In other words, what roles did drawing and writing serve in one graphic product? and
2. How, as evidenced by their use of drawing and writing terminology, did the children differentiate between drawing and writing? What did they call <u>writing</u>? What did they call <u>drawing</u>?

Related Research

Both drawing and writing are foreshadowed by young children's scribbling. From scribbling, the two forms of graphic symbolism appear to develop in roughly parallel fashion (Brittain, 1979). Early random scribbling develops into controlled scribbling as children begin to guide the loops and swirls. After these initial scribbling stages, children become concerned not only with physical control over lines, but also with the relationship between those lines and the objects they might stand for. Thus, between the ages of three and six, children's controlled scribbling gradually develops into recognizable objects which they name (Brittain, 1979) and, similarly, the scribbling gradually acquires the characteristics of print, including linearity, horizontal orientation, and the arrangement of letterlike forms, which children may read (by inventing a text) or request that others read (Clay, 1975; Hildreth, 1936).

Children's first pictorial symbols consist of objects that are meaningful to the child--people, houses, pets, trees, flowers. The drawn objects are not necessarily specified; that is, the child typically makes "a house," rather than "my house" (Gardner, 1980). These objects are generally placed on the page as separate entities, rather than arranged to produce a unified portrayal of one scene. Children's first conventionally written words are also single words, although they are specified; they are typically the names of familiar people (Durkin, 1966; Stine, 1980). However, children also request the names of familiar, although unspecified, objects such as house, school, pencil (Dyson, 1981). Like their drawn objects, these names are not necessarily arranged in any coherent fashion.

At this point, when a child's products can clearly be categorized as "drawings" (pictorial symbols) or "writing" (letters or letterlike symbols), the inference might be made that the child has completely differentiated the

writing and drawing processes (cf. Lavine, 1977). But, is the child producing "written language"? How does the child initially conceptualize writing as a representation of meaning? Does the child view writing, as is popularly conceived, as talk written down (e.g., Savage, 1977)?

Vygotsky (1978) suggested that children's first representations of meaning arise as first-order symbolism: their representations, such as those occurring in play and in drawings, directly denote objects or events. In his view then, in early representational writing, children directly denote entitites through graphics, much as they do in drawing; they do not represent parts of utterances.

The proposed initial relationship between language and writing is similar to the relationship between language and drawing. In both processes, oral language may extend upon or specify the meaning of the graphics; it is not directly encoded into the graphics.

Korzenick (1977) and Dyson (in press) have elaborated on this role of talk in the areas of drawing and writing respectively. Korzenick suggests that young children's drawings cannot be understood apart from the representational behavior (the language and the gestures) surrounding the drawing. She reported that five-year-olds tended to act out and talk through their representations; they failed to differentiate the gestural-verbal-graphic symbols.

Similarly, Dyson (in press) documented five-year-olds using oral language to surround and invest written graphics with meaning. The children's most common type of representational writing was to make names and numbers. Rather than trying to encode speech into graphics, the children typically made meaningful graphics about which they could talk (e.g., "This is my Mama's name.").

Thus, both drawing and early writing might, as King and Rentel (1979) suggest, be best described with Langer's (1957) term "presentational" symbolism. To elaborate on that idea, consider how a young child might represent graphically

his or her "best friend." The child might draw , and then comment orally, "Joe is my best friend." Or, the child might write JOE, and then explain, "Joe is my best friend." In both instances, the hypothetical child would have produced graphic symbols which could be considered presentational symbolism: the parts of the graphic depiction are not presented successively (i.e., as in language), but "simultaneously so the relations determining a visual structure are grasped in one act of vision" (Langer, 1957, p. 93). Young children may write Joe and be satisfied; adults would ask "Joe what?" because, in discourse, "the name prepares the mind for further conceptions" in which Joe figures (p. 62).

Thus, for young children, written words may be objects like drawn objects. For writing to become discourse, children must become aware that it is language itself which is written. The personal meanings revealed in the talk surrounding the written graphics must assume an explicit, ordered, and linear format upon the page. To again cite Vygotsky (1978), children must learn that one can draw, not only things, but language as well. Given this proposed significance of drawing in writing development, a specification of drawing/writing interrelationships is vital. The present study, then, contributes to such a specification.

Method

Site and Participants

In order to gain access to the children's views of writing, I became a participant observer in a self-contained, public school kindergarten located in a southwestern city. The classroom teacher followed the district's kindergarten curriculum, which did not include any formal instruction in reading and writing at the beginning of the school year.

The classroom selected was naturally-integrated and balanced socially, ethnically, and academically. Of the 22 child participants, ten were female;

twelve were male. Twelve children were Anglo, six were Hispanic, four were black. At the beginning of this study, the mean age of the children was 5 years; 7 months, with a range from 5 years; 1 month to 5 years; 11 months.

From this classroom of children, five were chosen for case study investigation. I selected five who, after 15 days of observation, I judged (a) to reflect the classroom's range of developmental writing levels as determined by particular assessment procedures based on Clay (1975) and (b) to willingly discuss their writing with me.

Data Collection Procedures

In order to conserve space, I present here only a brief overview of data collection procedures. A detailed description appears in Dyson (in press).

I gathered data for this study daily for a three-month period during the first half of the school year. The data were collected primarily in the morning, between 8:45 and 10:30, during the children's "center" or free-choice period.

Data collection proceeded through three overlapping phases. During the first phase (weeks 1-3), I observed and interacted with the children as they worked in their centers. This unstructured observation period allowed the children and me time to become accustomed to each other--to begin establishing rapport.

Also during the first phase, I assessed the children's writing behaviors in order to identify possible case study children. To this end, I asked each child individually to "come over and write with me" and, then, to "tell me what you wrote." Each child wrote a minimum of two times and a maximum of five, with each occasion occurring on separate days. The exact number of writing sessions was determined by my judgement that: (a) the child appeared comfortable with me and, thus, I had confidence that the writing could be considered a reasonable reflection of his/her writing behaviors; and (b) the child wrote in consistent

styles. For example, if the child wrote in cursive-like script in session #1, and then wrote conventionally-spelled words in session #2, I repeated the assessment sessions until the child produced no new writing behaviors.

I categorized the children into different types of child writers, basing the categorization on my analysis of their written products and their explanations of their writing. I chose five children for case study investigation who reflected the classroom's ranges of types of child writers. The five, all of whom were preconventional writers (i.e., none produced propositional-length messages through the use of an alphabetic writing system), were: Ashley, Tracy, Rachel, Vivi, and Freddy.

The second phase (weeks 3-11) was the major data collection period. During this phase, I established a center equipped with paper, pencils, and markers. The center was simply another optional activity open to the children during "free choice" time. I told the children to come write whenever and however they wished. Although the children were invited to come "write," they also came and drew; thus the center, by the children's design rather than my own, became a center for both types of graphic activity.

The center provided access to varied types of data, including: audio recordings of the children's talk at the center, written observations of individual children writing and drawing, children's graphic products, and observations of writing and drawing trends of both individual children and the class as a whole, recorded daily in a research log.

Finally, in phase three (weeks 11-12), I interviewed all 22 children individually about their perceptions of both what is required to learn to write and the reasons for writing. Although I asked additional questions to probe or clarify a child's response, the questions relevant to this analysis were: When (or why) do grown-ups write? When (or why) does your mom or dad write? What do they write? When (or why) do you write? What do you write?

Results and Discussion

At the end of the eleventh week of observation, I had recorded approximately 36 hours of spontaneous talk, collected approximately 500 products, made 112 handwritten observations of individual children, written notations on 377 child visits to the center, and conducted 22 child interviews.

The purpose of this study was to describe both the observed relationships between the drawing and writing processes and, also, the children's expressed differentiation between these two symbol-producing activities. Thus, during analysis of the collected data, patterns were identified (a) in how the children combined drawing and writing in the production of one graphic product, and (b) in how the children used drawing and writing terminology across production modes (i.e., how children used referentially the terms draw, make, and write, during drawing and writing).

The analysis procedure itself was inductive; it involved classifying and reclassifying data under different organizers. My objective was to detect categories of behavior which would yield a comprehensive description and interpretation of the children's behaviors.

The Intermingling of Drawing and Writing

The first objective was to analyze how the children themselves used drawing and writing. For this section of the analysis, I used broad but nonetheless adult definitions of drawing and writing which were based on the appearance of the product. Writing was defined as that (portion of the) product containing letters or letterlike forms. Drawing was defined as that (portion of the) product containing any non-letter or non-letterlike forms. Occasionally, letters (defined by the child also as letters) turned into non-letterlike objects; for example, a sideways I became Darth Vader's spaceship. This is intruiging behavior which suggests the close association between the drawing and writing processes.

However, for this portion of the analysis, the product was considered drawing because the final form was non-letterlike.

I began by organizing the data into units upon which to base the analysis. The basic unit was the graphic episode. I based the definition of a graphic episode upon the handwritten and transcribed records of the focal children's observation sessions. A graphic episode included any verbal and nonverbal behaviors occurring during the production of one graphic product; it included all behaviors surrounding (i.e., preceding and following) and related to the actual production of the drawing and writing. There were a total of 125 graphic episodes for the five focal children.

I organized the episodes into categories in which the children were combining drawing and writing in similar ways. I then composed descriptors to specify the distinguishing characteristics of that category. The resulting categories and the percentages of children's papers which they accounted for are as follows:

	How writing and drawing were combined	N*	%
A.	Drawing and writing were intermingled on the page; the writing and drawing were not related thematically.	60	(62.5)
B.	Drawing and writing contributed (roughly) equally to the complete product; the information supplied by the writing may have overlapped but did not simply label information supplied by the drawing.	15	(15.6)
C.	Writing served as a label for at least part of the drawn graphics.	14	(14.6)

How writing and drawing were combined	N*	%
D. Writing was part of the drawn graphics.	6	(6.25)
E. Drawing provided the meaningful context for the writing; it was not simply an illustration of the writing.	1	(1)

*Note: 29 of the 125 graphic episodes resulted in writing only and were not included in this analysis. Total number of episodes analyzed = 96.

The intermingling of drawing and writing which were not related thematically (category A) was the most typical type of written product, not only of the focal children, but of the class as a whole. As Figures 1a and b illustrate, the resulting products were not organized, coherent wholes. Rather, the children produced a series of symbols on the page.

Insert Figure 1 about here

The order in which children produced the graphics and their remarks about their work clarified the nonthematic relationship. For example, Rachel produced the symbols in Figure 1a in this order:

1. her name
2. the circle containing cross-like marks
3. the butterfly
4. Ach, about which she remarked, "That [A] is in my name. That [c] is in my name. That [h] is in my name. If I did the rest of it, it would be my name.
5. a pumpkin
6. "somebody"
7. "her ["somebody's"] dolly"
8. BlRi, about which she remarked: "This [B] goes in Brian's name. This

[l] goes in my name. This [R] goes in my name. This [i] goes in Brian's name."

9. (the unnamed) triangular-shaped object
10. a house with stairs and a little girl in the window, and
11. another pumpkin

Tracy produced Figure 1b in a similar manner, although, instead of letters and objects, the product contains written names and objects. The nonthematic relationship between drawing and writing is reflected in Tracy's explanation of her product:

I made a house and I made a (pause) my mother's name and I made a (pause) flowers and I made cat and dog and my name.

In the remainder of drawing and writing categories, the two types of graphic products were related thematically. Figure 2 illustrates the most typical way in which drawing and writing combined in a nonredundant way to form a complete whole (category B). Actually, Figure 2 is a "letter" from Rachel to her peer Vivi. This letter, like most of the letters the children produced, contains the addressee's name, the sender's name and, in this case, a picture of the addressee; the children often wrote letters which contained pictures of other entities, particularly houses and flowers.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Although an atypical occurrence, one child produced a graphic form which was an interesting example of the nonredundant combination of drawing and writing. Vivi wrote HBO Box, her word for "Home Box Office Television," as follows: HBO .

Figures 3a and b illustrate category C, in which writing served as a label for at least part of the drawn graphics. As was the case in the previously

discussed samples, one must consider the children's talk about their work in order to understand the writing/writing relationship. Vivi explained Figure 3a as follows:

> I got cake [the K above the word cake was an earlier and abandoned effort to independently spell cake], rainbow, boat, and a house, and a same thing as this is right there [pointing to a word written on the back of her paper which she had attempted to copy], and I got flower (VRE) and I got a flower.

Insert Figure 3 about here

Ashley's Figure 3b, although far less conventional in appearance, is essentially the same type of drawing/writing combination. The letters in section A of the product are intended as a label for the accompanying drawing. Ashley made the letters after he made the drawing, explaining that they were "the letters of it"--they were the letters that went with the depicted person (his "cousin"). The letters fulfilled, then, the same function as Vivi's VRE, letters which went with the depicted flower. The major difference between the two products, beyond Ashley's less conventional letterlike forms, is that Ashley was not exactly sure what his letters said because "I don't read writing."

An example of writing as part of the drawn object (category D) is given in Figure 4, another of Ashley's products. Superman has two S's on his shirt; the letters after the S on Superman's midsection were made as Ashley attempted to write his name. The S was there simply because, as Ashley said, "Superman always have an S on his shirt." Ashley viewed the S as a part of Superman.

Insert Figure 4 about here

Finally, Figure 5, a product by Rachel, illustrates category E, in which the drawing provides the context for the written text. More meaning is conveyed in the drawing than in the writing although, as in previous categories, listening to the child's talk was essential in order to understand the drawing/writing relationship:

Insert Figure 5 about here

Rachel had been drawing the picture in Figure 5 as she narrated a story about two sisters, one of whom had locked the other out: "Sister, open up the door! [Rachel knocks twice on table.] You dummy. Sister, you better come and open this door or else I'm gonna' throw this pumpkin shell on your head."

That's what it's gonna' be saying.

Rachel now wrote line A in Figure 5 and explained to me:

It says, "Open the door, Sister. Open, open, open else I'm gonna' throw this pumpkin shell right on your head."

It's clear that the children in this classroom were not combining writing and drawing in conventional ways. That is, they did not write a "story" and then ilustrate it, nor did they draw a story as a "prewriting" activity. Rather, they made written names or letters which existed among the drawn forms on the page; typically, the drawing and writing were not thematically related.

The Children's Differentiation between Drawing and Writing

To this point, I have focused on how the children combined drawing and writing, assuming adult definitions of those terms. At this point, I wish to turn to how the children themselves viewed their own graphic activity. To answer that question, I focused on the talk that occurred during each graphic episode, that is, the talk surrounding the production of the graphic products

just discussed. The graphic episodes as previously defined were based on the work of the five case study children. However, since the children interacted freely with each other at the center, analyzing the talk which occurred during the episodes naturally involved considering the talk of all 22 children.

Even before carefully analyzing the data, the close association between drawing and writing was in evidence. The children frequently interchanged the terms draw and write, most typically using write in situations in which an adult would use make or draw. In fact, 17 of the 22 children used write in this way at least once. Further, there was not a linear relationship between the unconventional use of the term write and the children's observed maturity as writers. Children of greatly varying degrees of writing sophistication were observed to use the term write in unconventional ways.

In order to analyze the children's perceptions of drawing and writing, I studied the data, searching for regularities in the ways the children used drawing and writing terminology across different types of graphic activities (e.g., writing and drawing "letters" for others versus writing a label for a drawn picture). By looking at the situations in which children interchanged terms, I aimed to uncover aspects of writing's meanings for children.

I wish to point out here an unconventionality that did not typically occur. Before I analyzed the data I had hypothesized that the children might consider writing like drawing in that they often "wrote" by simply "drawing" forms, by creating appropriate-looking graphics with no apparent concern for communicating a specific message. However, the children rarely referred to any letterlike forms as drawing, nor were non-letterlike symbols referred to as writing. However, the act of producing a non-letterlike form might be referred to as the act of writing. When did this happen? What might writing mean to the child?

On the basis of my analysis, writing appeared to have several meanings which overlapped those of drawing. Both serve: to graphically represent people, objects, or events; to create a graphic object for another; and to graphically represent a narrative. In the next sections, I illustrate each of these meanings.

Writing: representing entities. As noted in the discussion of Figure 1, the symbolizing of people and objects was the most typical representational writing done by the children in this class. Similarly, the most typical unconventional use of the term write was in reference to the drawing of an object, as in "I'm gonna' write him pants." If one excludes discursive written language, drawing and writing become quite similar, differing simply in whether or not one uses letters or pictorial symbols to denote the object. Generally, I could tell if a child planned to write the label or draw the pictorial representation by noting the presence or absence of the article a.

In two writing episodes, the importance of the article was dramatized. The first episode involved the only instance of conflict among the children in regard to this use of write; the child whose competence was questioned actually intended to write but had inserted an article in an inappropriate place:

> Courtney: I'm gonna' write a horse and um I don't know what I'm gonna' write today.
>
> Linda: Draw, not write a horse, draw a horse.
>
> Courtney: I'm gonna' spell it.

The second episode involved the only instance of intrapersonal conflict; one child, Mark, again seemed to be deciding as much on the use of the article a as on the use of write or draw:

> Mark (to Dyson): I wonder how you draw star. No, I wonder how you write star. How do you write a star--not write a star. I mean . . . let me copy it. (Mark wants me to write it.)

In both these excerpts, write was used in reference to symbolizing objects. To more clearly illustrate this pervasive association between writing and concrete entities, I include the following two episodes involving two other class members: Damon and Kevin.

Damon had been drawing the picture in Figure 6. After he was finished, I began to interview him about writing. I asked him what his parents wrote and what he wrote. He then explained to me that, although his parents wrote, "I just write houses and stuff." The use of the word just implies that Damon knew that sort of thing, drawing, wasn't what I had in mind. A few minutes later, Damon volunteered to try to write:

I'm gonna' try to write church. You know how to write church?

Write it on a little piece of paper, that little bitty mouse church

(pointing to a small church he had previously drawn on his paper.)

When Damon asked me to write church for him, he had in mind "that little bitty mouse church." He seems to say, "write that church on my paper for me," as though writing were a matter of making letters for objects, which are then read as the names of those objects.

Insert Figure 6 about here

Damon's peer, Kevin, provided another illustration:

Dyson: What are you writing, Kevin?

Kevin: I'm writing this flower. (See Figure 7; Kevin writes letters around flower.)

Dyson: And now?

Kevin: I'm gonna' spell that little dot on it. (Kevin adds more letters for the "dot" in the middle of the flower.)

Kevin later explained that he had written, among other things, little flower and dot.

Insert Figure 7 about here

Although their comments are particularly revealing, both Kevin and Damon are representative of the children in the observed classroom; their use of the term write, whether in reference to the production of pictorial or letter symbols, demonstrates the association of writing with the representation of concrete entities.

Despite the frequent use of write to refer to both pictorial and letter symbols, in the interview situation, in which I directly asked the children about writing, they seemed aware of the differences between how they "wrote" and how adults "wrote." When I asked them what, when, and why adults write, they most typically told me that adults wrote words and letters, as in G, Q, M, because they want to. On the other hand, they said they wrote their names and the ABC's, although seven of the 22 children told me that they only drew ("All I like to do is draw," or, like Damon, "I just write houses and stuff.").

Thus, although most of the children occasionally substituted write for draw, they did know that writing, at least in the adult world, resulted in a product containing letter forms as opposed to pictures. There was a context, however, in which the children seemed to genuinely view drawing as writing. This context was the production of what the children alternately referred to as "notes," "letters," or "presents."

Writing: creating objects for others. When adults write letters, they write messages; however, children's letters often consist of pictures. Consider the following excerpt from an interview with another class member, Shawna:

When does your mom write?

She writes every night. She writes letters to my Grandma, and my Grandpa, and all my friends.

What does she write in the letters?

Like, we're gonna' have a baby. . . .

What do you write?

Car, pen, house, box, paper, pencil. . . .

When you write a letter for your Grandma, what do you write?

I write my name, and I write pictures for my Grandma.

Shawna's remarks gained new significance as I reflected upon the "letters written" by the children in the room. The children's letters contained no particular message; typically, they consisted of the names of the addressee and the sender and a picture. (See Figure 2.) Their writing of letters, alternately referred to as "notes" or "presents," involved primarily making graphic objects for someone else, and, indeed, making something for someone else is an aspect of writing letters.

I will illustrate this view of writing as creating graphic objects for others by briefly discussing an excerpt from one of Vivi's graphic episodes. To appreciate the significarce of this episode, it is important to bear in mind that Vivi, relative to the other children in the class, clearly distinguished between drawing and writing. She was atypical in that she never used write to refer to drawing particular entities. Further, she clearly attempted to write spoken words which in turn stood for objects (i.e., she attempted to go from formal characteristics of the oral utterance to particular written graphics; for a discussion of her style, see Dyson, in press). Nonetheless, Vivi did use writing in reference to drawing when she was producing a "note" or a "letter" for someone:

Vivi: (Vivi was drawing a picture.) I'm writing notes.

Dyson: When?

Vivi: [illegible]. I can't wait to give this to Ms. G. [classroom teacher].

(Vivi takes the note to Ms. G., returns to the center and remarks:)

She love it.

Although this use of writing for drawing may seem strange, one need only recall the many notes one has written, not with anything in particular to say, but simply to get something in the mail to someone one wishes to stay in touch with. Although Vivi was drawing, she was creating a particular form for a particular person in order to touch base with, and to please, someone important to her.

Writing: the representation of a story. A final use of write for draw occurred in the context of a child telling a story as he or she drew. This use of write for draw differed from writing as the representation of a specific entity only in that, in the present case, the entity represented had a role in a larger piece of discourse. The following narrative, told by Rachel during the production of Figure 8, illustrates this use:

Insert Figure 8 about here

Rachel: He's pushing her mom because she wouldn't hurry up. Her little boy was pushing her because she wouldn't hurry up. And she couldn't find the door . . . the way to find that Christmas tree. She was trying to get to the other side to get her little baby. There--see that's her little baby . . . and she was trying to get her 'cuz she might get hurt. She's just a little bitty girl. And they saw--No, I don't know how to write that.

I had overhead Rachel's comment and so I intervened:

What?

Rachel: I wanta MAKE a Rudolph, not write it.

Although this use of write for draw occurred relatively infrequently, it is significant as, in this case, the drawing is taking form within an oral narrative. In other words, discourse is being represented by a global form of representation, a drawing. Rachel, in talking about her picture, did not say, "This is the mother. This is the little boy. This is the door." Rather, she told an evolving narrative which she, in a sense, "wrote" down.

Summary and Implications

My analysis of the children's products, and the talk surrounding those products, indicated (a) the predominantly nondiscursive nature of the children's writing, (b) the lack of symbolic redundancy in the children's representational products, and (c) the tenuous line between drawing and writing for these young children as reflected in their frequent interchanging of the terms draw and write. These findings concerning both how children combined the drawing and writing processes and how they talked about what they were doing are examined more closely in the following sections.

How do children combine drawing and writing? In the observed classroom, the children's writing was frequently intermingled with drawing in a nonthematic and nonredundant way. As is typical of young children, their pictorial symbols consisted of familiar and meaningful objects--houses, people, pets--placed in what seemed a random arrangement upon the page. Amidst these objects, the children put familiar and meaningful letters and words which were not necessarily related to the drawn objects.

What's "drawing" and what's "writing"? For the children themselves, a thin line appeared to exist between drawing and writing as evidenced by the frequent use of the term write for draw. Interestingly, when asked about adult writing and then about their own, the children appeared to clearly understand that, in the context of adult writing, they could write primarily their names and the ABC's. Why, then, did they frequently use write for draw?

In answer to that question, I suggested that, although the written and drawn graphics were clearly different, the processes themselves were not: when the children were involved in graphic activity, the distinction between the processes did not appear critical. Further, it should be noted that the children in this study were engaged in both processes in a non-adult-structured situation (i.e., an adult did not guide or organize their work, as in, "Now that you've drawn, Jesse, let's write about your picture.").

By looking at the situations in which the children interchanged terminology, I aimed to uncover aspects of writing's meanings. From this analysis, writing appeared to have several meanings which overlapped those of drawing: to graphically symbolize a concrete entity, to create a graphic object for another, and to graphically represent a narrative. Thus, children could fulfill their intentions through either medium.

Theoretical implications. The findings of this study are consistent with the suggestion of Harste, Burke, and Woodward (1982) that print information is not clearly differentiated from other communicative systems (e.g., mathematical, artistic, dramatic). Harste et al. stress children's use of these systems to communicate a message, whereas, based on my observations, I stress children's use of primarily pictures, letters, and numbers to resemble or symbolize a meaningful aspect of their environment, which aspect could simply be a particular alphabet letter which the child knows well (see discussion of Figure 1a).

This concept of writing to symbolize a concrete entity was the one most widely evidenced in this classroom; the children could "write" objects pictorially or with letters, conveying the referent's full meaning through talk. The children's writing behaviors, including their talk about their writing, suggested that young writers may initially view print as direct graphic symbolism, rather than as a representation of speech, which in turn stands for referents. That

inference is based on this study which aimed to examine children's writing and drawing from the vantage point of their own understandings and intentions, their own structuring of the writing and drawing tasks. That hypothesis must be verified through the use of researcher-structured tasks and the examining of greater numbers of children across age levels. Nonetheless, when combined with the theoretical and research literature on writing development, this study's data offer support, found in the spontaneous activity of children, for Vygotsky's (1978) theoretical position. That is, the documented close association of writing wtih drawing may represent an important developmental transition from, as Vygotsky suggested, drawing things to drawing disembedded language. For, in order to write, children's transparent tool, language, must become an object of reflection (Vygotsky, 1962). In a sense, that's what the observed children were doing; they were making the names of particular objects (like Damon's church and Tracy's Sonya) graphic, visible, objects of reflection.

In this regard, MacKay and Thompson (1968) have observed that young English children, writing by using word cards, progressed from simply listing words with no apparent link, to writing telegraphic sentences, such as "Mary ball," which are read as complete sentences, "Mary has a ball," (behavior consistent with Ferreiro's 1978, 1980 work) and then finally to writing a complete sentence. The names of people and objects were made visibile, concrete, and then the transfer to writing as language ("visibie language") was made.

Theoretically, then, this study's findings imply that the process of learning to write is, in part, a process of differentiating and consolidating the separate meanings of two forms of graphic symbolism, drawing and writing, as children encounter them and make use of them in their daily activities. The findings suggest as well that the essential discursive nature of the writing process--its connection with language--is not obvious to young children.

Contrary to popular belief, writing may not begin as speech written down. The differentiation of writing from drawing and its precise connection with language is not necessarily a step preceding, but a gradual process occurring during and through first attempts to represent experience through letter graphics.

In our efforts to understand the development of written language, we need to search for such interrelationships between children's use of alternate symbolic modes and for changes in those interrelationships over time. A consideration of writing development, including writing which occurs before children are functioning within the conventional alphabetic writing system, should be included within such research efforts to understand the growth of early symbolization as those described by Gardner and Wolf (1979, p. ix): studies of early symbolism across a variety of modes which "should yield a picture of symbolic competence which takes into account growth within individual media, relations among media, sources of symbolization in other domains of growth, and the possibility of diverse routes to symbolic competence."

Teaching implications. The findings of this study have implications for practice as well. The school's goal of helping children learn to write is a deceptively simple description of an inherently complex phenomenon. To connect with the views of children themselves, particularly those who are just beginning their own exploration of this "writing" phenomenon, we might do well to, first of all, place increased value on children's own spontaneous exploration of the writing process (including such elementary acts as asking how one spells "my mommy's name"). In addition, we might also consider the range of contexts for writing presented in school. Children need opportunities to identify the diverse range of situations in which writing and/or drawing are the chosen modes of expression in our culture (cf. Florio & Clark, 1982). As children dictate comments about their drawings, receive and respond to letters through the

classroom mailbox, produce homemade books for the classroom library, make presents and cards for parents and peers, and similar tasks, they are actively involved with expressing ideas in global and discursive forms, learning the respective rules of each.

In closing, I share here five-year-old Courtney's perception of the drawing/writing relationship. It was near Christmas, and Courtney, like many of her peers, was into drawing Christmas pictures. While drawing Santa one day, Courtney remarked, "I would spell Santa Claus if I was six." I agree with Courtney. I have argued here that, from the children's perspective, the transition may not be from speech to writing, but from drawing to writing, and then the connection with language is made. The vivid images, memories, and dreams which surround Courtney's drawn Santa will one day, I hope, be transformed into elaborate drawings and extended prose as she grows in the ability to symbolize her experiences for herself and for others.

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Footnotes

I am indebted to Celia Genishi for her thoughtful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

[1]The difference in stress between the Harste et al. paper and my own is perhaps attributable to the research setting. The children in the former study were writing in interview situations for an adult whereas the children in the current study wrote spontaneously because they "wanted to."

Figure Captions

Figure 1. The intermingling of drawing and writing in a nonthematic way.

Figure 2. The nonredundant combination of drawing and writing to form a "letter."

Figure 3. Writing as a label for drawing.

Figure 4. Writing as a part of the drawn object.

Figure 5. Drawing as a context for writing.

Figure 6. Writing as the representation of a specific entity: "Write . . . that little bitty mouse church."

Figure 7. Writing as the representation of a specific entity: "I'm writing this flower."

Figure 8. Writing as the representation of a narrative.

Figure 1

A

B

Figure 2

Figure 3

A

B

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

Figure 8